



Meat Grading & Certification Branch

STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS

PURPOSE

This Instruction outlines the responsibilities of Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch supervisors and graders, involving the knowledge, application, and interpretation of official standards and specifications.

POLICY

It is the policy of the MGC Branch that all technical personnel be fully conversant with the contents of each Official U.S. Grade Standard for carcasses of all eligible species. Graders and supervisors shall discuss and explain grade placements in the official terminology contained in the standards and shall uniformly and consistently apply the standards. In addition, technical employees must have a working knowledge of specifications when performing certification duties and they must ensure that the products being certified meet applicable requirements contained in the specification. Each employee must maintain a complete set of or have Internet/Intranet access to current standards and specifications.

I. Supervisor Responsibility

A. Supervisors are responsible for:

1. Reviewing Standards, Specifications, Instructions, Rules and Regulations.
2. Requiring that all meat graders under their supervision are able to apply the standards and specifications consistent with the employee's job description and in accordance with MGC Branch policies as set forth in the MGC Instructions, and Rules and Regulations.
3. Requiring meat graders to discuss and explain their grade placements using the official terminology contained in the standards.
4. Providing training and assistance to employees whose work performance requires improvement.
5. Rotating duty assignments, in accordance with union agreement, so employees may maintain their proficiency in applying official standards and specifications.

6. Providing an official interpretation of the standards or specifications when requested by graders or industry personnel.

II. Grader Responsibility

A. Graders are responsible for:

1. Knowing the contents of the official standards for grades of meat and specifications and being able to apply them in accordance with MGC Branch policies and procedures.
2. Discussing, explaining and defending grade placements, to supervision and members of industry, using terminology established by the official standards.
3. Requesting an official interpretation from their supervisor on any issue they are uncertain.
4. Having copies of or access to applicable official standards and/or specifications, a copy of "Meats, Prepared Meats, and Meat Products" and other required documents (e.g., "U.S. Standards for Condition of Food Containers," appropriate random sampling forms, laboratory analysis forms, official USDA marbling photographs) for the particular assignment readily available.

III. Official Grade Standards

"Official United States Standards for Grades of Carcass Beef."

"Official United States Standards for Grades of Veal and Calf Carcasses."

"Official United States Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses."

"Official United States Standards for Grades of Pork Carcasses."

When performing official duties, graders and supervisors are to use the standards in conjunction with applicable MGC Branch Instructions and the Rules and Regulations. Standards are available through the MGC Branch Intranet at Standards and Specifications or by accessing the [Livestock and Seed Standards](#).

When a purchaser requests assistance in preparing new or modified specifications, a copy of the Standard Procedure 1 (Form SP-1) for Marketing Program Specification Development and Approval may be obtained by accessing the MGC Branch Intranet SP1 Procedures for Marketing Program Requests. The purchaser shall submit proposed specifications to the MGC Branch. The MGC Branch shall forward requests to the Standards, Analysis, and Technology (SAT) Branch for consideration. The SAT Branch will consider the request, work with the purchaser to develop the specification

and issue approved specifications. The MGC Branch will implement certification procedures for approved specifications only.

Approved specifications, certification handbooks, and visual aids are available or linked to the MGC Branch Intranet at Standards and Specifications.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.